



DOMINICAN COLLEGE

Taylor's Hill

WELLBEING POLICY

1 INTRODUCTION

The Board of Management of Dominican College, Taylor's Hill, Galway, accepts that parents are first and foremost the primary educators and promoters of their children in relation to their wellbeing across all aspects of their lives. This policy is designed to ensure that Dominican College can support the work of parents in raising awareness and providing opportunities to foster positive mental, physical, emotional and social wellbeing. This policy was formulated in consultation with teachers, students and parents of Dominican College; with reference to the NEPS document *Wellbeing in Post-Primary Schools*; and the NCCA *Wellbeing Guidelines*. A number of other school policies are intrinsically linked to this document and form the wider context of wellbeing. These include:

- Code of Behaviour Policy
- RSE Policy
- Substance Use Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Critical Incident Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Homework Policy
- Assessment Policy
- Guidance Plan
- Healthy Eating Policy

2 RATIONALE

2.1 Why Does Wellbeing Matter?

Childhood can be seen as a process of ‘wellbecoming’, where young people are gaining knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that will sustain them throughout their lives. This is a lifelong journey, but one where schools play an important part. The goal for wellbeing is human flourishing and flourishing rests on five pillars: positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment. When children and young people are ‘flourishing’, they are not only curious and eager to learn, they are:

- creative and imaginative
- connected and empathetic
- good team players
- confident about who they are
- resilient and persistent
- positive about themselves and see themselves growing into better people.

The Board of Management of Dominican College recognises that schools have an important role to play in supporting and promoting students’ learning *about* wellbeing and *for* wellbeing. They learn about wellbeing through specific areas of the curriculum and various wellbeing events and initiatives that are organised to develop wellbeing related awareness, knowledge and skills.

Throughout their time in Dominican College we strive to:

- i. help our students reach their full potential.
- ii. provide our students with opportunities to develop the skills and competencies necessary to learn about themselves, to care for themselves and others.
- iii. help our students to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives and social development.

Students learn about and develop wellbeing when their whole experience of school life, including all the day-to-day interactions, both within and beyond the classroom, are respectful and caring. Thinking about learning for wellbeing requires that we consider not only what students learn, but also how they learn it. Learning for wellbeing can be nurtured in all subjects and by all teachers and staff.

2.2 The Policy Context:

Student wellbeing is present when students realise their abilities; take care of their physical wellbeing; can cope with the normal stresses of life; and have a sense of purpose and belonging to a wider community. This policy seeks to provide a context as to how that occurs in Dominican College.

3 WELLBEING, A WHOLE SCHOOL ENDEAVOUR

The Board of Management of Dominican College recognises that every member of staff has a role to play in fostering positive wellbeing for each of the students in the school. The importance of positive relationships between students and staff within the school is recognised and this plays an important role in fostering a positive and supportive environment in the school.

The school's formal structures provide important means of facilitating and supporting student wellbeing.

3.1 Class Teachers, Tutors & Year Heads

Through their daily contact with students, class teachers play a vital role in supporting and encouraging them. They are proactive in highlighting issues or areas of concern when they occur and, where appropriate, working with students, parents and other staff to address these.

Each student is assigned to a tutor group which is supported by their Class Tutor.

Year Heads play a vital role by gaining an overview of the students in their group and work closely with their Class Tutors and class teachers as appropriate.

3.2 Pastoral Care Team, Guidance Counsellor & Wellbeing working group.

The school Guidance Counsellor is available to students who wish to speak to her/him. Students may make an appointment to meet with the Counsellor or members of staff may refer students the Counsellor.

The school Care Team meets on a frequent basis to discuss students in need of care or support. This team consists of the Principal, Deputy Principal, Year Heads, Learning Support teachers and the Guidance Counsellor.

The school has formed a 'Wellbeing Team' who have worked to identify areas for improvement and continue to develop strategies and initiatives to raise awareness of wellbeing of our school community.

3.3 SPHE Programme

The Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme deals with a wide range of issues. These issues are addressed in ten modules, each of which appears in each year of the junior cycle. The emphasis in this programme is on building skills, understanding attitudes and values important to all these areas. The ten modules are:

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- Belonging and Integrating
- Self-Management. A sense of purpose.
- Communication Skills
- Physical Health
- Friendships
- Relationships & Sexuality
- Emotional Health
- Influences & Decisions
- Substance Use
- Personal Safety

3.4 Year Group Induction and Assemblies:

Throughout the school year students will engage in activities which seek to enhance their sense of wellbeing. At the start of the school year students undertake an induction programme includes relationship and team-building exercises, information shared on health & safety procedures, managing school resources such as lockers, the history of our school community, positive behaviour and the code of conduct and other areas. This induction facilitates a smooth transition to the new school year and is especially important for all new students to the school.

Each year group have multiple assemblies during the year where the Year Head, Principal and Deputy Principal share information and generally maintain contact with the students. Assemblies are also used to provide guidance to students and recognise student achievement. We believe that recognising such positive achievements enriches the wellbeing of all involved.

3.5 House System

Dominican College has a house system in place which operates on a vertical level, linking students across all year groups and fostering supportive relationships between students in different year groups. An important component of this system is the positive recognition of student achievements, behaviour and activities which may result in students being awarded merit tokens.

3.6 School Mass

Our start of year school Mass is an opportunity for our entire school community to gather together to celebrate the tradition of Dominican College. All members of our school community, regardless of their religious denomination, are encouraged to attend this important gathering. We also hold a Carol Service in the school at Christmas where each student is encouraged to take part. There is a strong sense of community and belonging evident which is valuable for all aspects of wellbeing in Dominican College.

3.7 Communication

At Dominican College we strive to have open channels of communication between the school and home. These include:

- Parent-teacher meetings
- Information meetings for parents
- Daily announcements to students
- Student Council
- Student Journal
- School app
- School website
- School newsletter

3.8 Friends Programme

‘Fun Friends’, ‘Friends for Life’ and ‘My Friends Youth’ are school-based anxiety prevention and resilience building programmes developed by Dr. Paula Barrett. Several teachers in Dominican College have been trained in the delivery of the Friends programme. This programme helps students to develop resilience by teaching them effective strategies to cope with, problem solve and manage all forms of emotional distress, including worry, stress, change and anxiety. Skills learned throughout the programme help students both now and in later life.

Students in 1st year and Transition Year will undertake this programme under the guidance of our teachers.

3.9 Anti-Bullying / Friendship Week

To raise awareness and empathy in our students the school organises an annual anti-bullying / friendship week. During this week, many students take part in class discussions and activities regarding bullying, friendship, empathy and appropriate social behaviour.

3.10 Active Week & Get Healthy Week

During Active Week, many activities are planned which address positive mental, physical, emotional and social wellbeing. External speakers and other activities are organised to encourage students to engage in an active a healthy lifestyle. All members of our school community are encouraged to take part in activities.

3.11 Extra-Curricular Activities

Dominican College offers its students many opportunities to undertake extra-curricular activities. There are a wide range of activities available to students, both sporting and non-sporting. Students are encouraged to become involved such activities as we believe that these benefit their overall sense of wellbeing.

3.12 Study Skills

Throughout their time in Dominican College students receive study skills advice, guidance and assistance. This format in which this occurs may vary – class teacher support, Guidance Counsellor support, provision of workshops provided by external specialists.

3.13 *Retreats*

In line with our Catholic ethos, we offer retreats to our students. These retreats provide students with an opportunity to reflect and take time to focus on areas which enrich the lives and wellbeing of our students.

3.14 *The Wellbeing of Staff and Others in Our School Community*

Dominican College promotes and encourages an awareness of wellbeing for all members of our school community. The Board of Management seeks to support its staff in an understanding and compassionate manner. Support structures are also in place for staff through their trade unions and the Employee Assistance Scheme provided by the Department of Education and Skills.

The Board of Management of Dominican College offers its staff opportunities to undertake continuing professional development activities. The Board seeks to invest in the development for the staff to ensure they are valued and enriched. Fostering a supportive environment leads to increased wellbeing for all and ultimately, better outcomes for our staff and students.

4 WELLBEING AND THE CURRICULUM

Wellbeing is one of the core principles of the Junior Cycle programme. Dominican College is compliant with DES guidelines as to the time allocation to the area of Wellbeing in 1st, 2nd and 3rd Years. In Junior Cycle, the subjects of CSPE, SPHE and PE provide the basis of the Wellbeing programme. However, wellbeing is addressed across the curriculum for all year groups in other subjects such as Choir, Science, English, Religious Education, Home Economics and beyond.

As stated above, student wellbeing is at the centre of the ethos of Dominican College and we seek to enhance student wellbeing across all year groups both through the formal curriculum but also through extra-curricular activities, co-curricular activities and by way of the culture, environment and ethos of the school.

5 MONITORING & REVIEW

5.1 This policy will be reviewed regularly. It will take into account any legislative changes, new policy and strategy documents either in the school or from the Department of Education and Skills, changes in school facilities and feedback from parents, students and staff. The review will be carried out by the Wellbeing Committee comprising of representatives from the students and staff. Parental views will be acquired through the Parents' Council.

This policy was reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management of Dominican College on 15th October 2018.